



# REBUILD IOWA OFFICE (RIO) LEGISLATIVE WEEKLY

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## RIO MISSION:

The Rebuild Iowa Office will lead the State of Iowa's efforts to rebuild safer, stronger and smarter in the wake of the 2008 severe storms and catastrophic flooding.

## RIO VISION:

We envision a resilient Iowa that will be safe, sustainable and economically strong for its people, reaffirming its ties to the land, rivers, environment and rich cultural history.

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## IOWA DISASTER RECOVERY LEARNING CONFERENCE

The Rebuild Iowa Office, along with the Office of Congressman Dave Loebsack and the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) hosted the Iowa Disaster Recovery Learning Conference Jan. 29 in Cedar Rapids. The conference brought together representatives from non-profit organizations, voluntary agencies, faith-based organizations, government and community foundations active in Iowa's recovery from the 2008 disasters.

The group shared best practices, innovations and lessons learned and offered recommendations to strengthen local, state and federal recovery policies.



Participants at the Iowa Disaster Recovery Learning Conference discuss issues faced by non-profits working in disaster recovery.

The day's discussions also informed the work of President Obama's Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group,

which will offer recommendations on improving disaster recovery policy.

## 2010 BILLS TO MINIMIZE THE EFFECTS OF FUTURE FLOODS

In the wake of the devastating disasters of 2008, several important pieces of legislation promote policies that will minimize the effects of future floods. Three bills being supported by the Rebuild Iowa Office directly reflect the vision of the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission (RIAC) and its task forces as outlined in the *120-Day Report* released in November 2008, as well as the experiences of the RIO and other state agencies in coordinating recovery efforts.

The **Disaster Recovery Case Management** bills (HSB 576, SSB 3097) would establish the Iowa Department of Human

Services as the lead entity for coordination of future case management efforts to assist disaster-affected individuals with identifying resources available to them. The Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division would also assist through their Iowa Disaster Human Resources Council (IDHRC), which coordinates with the non-profit and faith-based community in providing disaster assistance. The bill also establishes a task force to recommend a case management structure for businesses by Nov. 15, 2010 to the Governor and General Assembly. These bills reflect

RIAC Recommendations #1 (assisting individuals) and #3 (assisting small business and nonprofits).

The **Iowa Smart Planning** bills (HSB 592, SSB 3096) would adopt ten smart planning principles to be considered by state, regional and local governments when undertaking planning efforts. The bills also provide guidance for cities and counties when they choose to undertake comprehensive planning for future development. The third component of these bills would create a task force to identify recommendations on how

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planning can be better coordinated among state agencies and between the state, regional and local levels. This reflects RIAC Recommendation #8 (regional planning).

**The Flood Plain Management** bills (HSB 573, SSB 3098) outline recommendations from the Water Resources Coordinating Council (WRCC) for improved flood plain

management in the state. These recommendations were solicited when HF 756 was passed in the 2009 session. The 16 policy recommendations included in the bill range from education efforts to specific study recommendations, and from adoption of stormwater standards and flood plain regulations to implementation of a pilot watershed project. These bills reflect RIAC Recommendation #9 (improved flood plain

management) and recommendations from the WRCC (on the RIO Web site at [www.rio.iowa.gov/wrcc/index.html](http://www.rio.iowa.gov/wrcc/index.html)).

The Rebuild Iowa Office encourages Iowa's legislators to consider these important bills. It is imperative that the state rebuild from the 2008 disasters safer, stronger and smarter. Passage of the bills this session will allow the RIO to assist in coordinating their introduction before the Office sunsets in 2011.



## MAPPING IOWA'S FLOOD PLAINS

In its *120-Day Report* (released November 2008), the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission recommended that Iowa should complete statewide flood plain mapping using state-of-the-art technology. This is being accomplished under the lead of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which is collaborating with the Iowa Flood Center and FEMA to complete new flood plain maps for Iowa. The flood plain mapping project will result in accurate, up-to-date flood hazard mapping for the entire state. This will provide the public with critical information about flood risks and will facilitate sound decision-making in the administration of flood plain ordinances, zoning and land use planning.

The RIAC's *120-Day Report* (pg. 44, Goal 9 – improved flood plain management) also encourages the state to take the initiative to move flood plain policy forward while mapping is being completed, stating "The state could take a wait-and-see approach to setting policy after the flood plain mapping is complete statewide, but this would waste precious time that regions need to devote to their priorities."

### LiDAR Maps vs. FEMA Map Modernization

There has been confusion over the difference between the state's mapping efforts and the recent release of maps by FEMA as the federal government digitizes existing maps.

The DNR is collaborating with FEMA and sharing resources to create and maintain accurate, up-to-date flood hazard data for the state. The DNR is using \$15 million in disaster-related Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds appropriated to Iowa to map the 85 Iowa counties presidentially-declared as disaster areas in 2008. It is also the DNR's goal to provide flood plain maps for the remaining 14 counties utilizing existing flood plain management staff and available FEMA funding.

High resolution digital elevation data resulting from the state's Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) collection project will be used as a basis for the new maps. This project uses laser-based technology to derive elevation data accurate to within inches. Existing FEMA maps have been developed using outdated elevation data accurate to within several feet. Once complete, DNR-created flood maps will go through a process to be

recognized as official FEMA "Flood Insurance Rate Maps" (FIRMs).

As FEMA digitizes and releases their existing maps for electronic access after the 2008 floods, some Iowa communities have expressed concern about the accuracy of the maps. There are two ways a community can appeal to FEMA to change the maps, although both require varying levels of engineering expertise.

1. If maps have already been officially recognized by FEMA, a formal revision process could result in FEMA issuing official map revisions. These revisions must be based on new or updated technical information supplied by the community, and would not be funded by FEMA.
2. If maps have been issued but not yet officially recognized by FEMA, a community can bring areas in question to FEMA's attention. If the community can provide new or updated technical information to warrant revisions, FEMA should adopt the changes prior to the maps becoming final, with little or no cost to the community.

For information about flood plain mapping, contact DNR Engineer Scott Ralston at (515) 281-8121.

